

CONGRESSMAN

JESÚS "CHUY" GARCÍA

4th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

Representative Garcia Honors Workers Around the Nation During “Striketober”

**Wednesday, October 20, 2021
Remarks as Prepared for Delivery**

“From this podium, and on the streets of Chicago, I’ve talked a lot about our essential workers. They worked every day to keep our country going, often risking their lives and their families, and they deserve respect and dignity on the job.

“But today, I want to talk about the courage it takes to NOT go to work— and to go out on strike for better working conditions.

“As we speak, thousands of workers are on strike. From nurses and healthcare workers to people who make cereal, tractors, and whiskey. And tens of thousands more have taken strike votes and are ready to join them if they can’t reach agreements with their employers.

“It’s a strike wave— we are calling it ‘Striketober.’ And I stand today in solidarity with all these workers who are fighting for safer working conditions, a decent living wage and the ability to retire with dignity.

“Just in the past few weeks in my city of Chicago, I stood with:

- Nabisco workers from the Bakers’ Union,
- auto mechanics from the Mechanics Union, part of the Machinists,
- and employees of the Art Institute of Chicago who are fighting to join AFSCME.

“Only days later, the workers at the El Milagro tortilla plant in my own neighborhood walked out protesting an unsafe workplace, unfair wages, and sexual harassment at the company’s plants.

“In recent years teachers, nurses, county employees, nursing home workers, and symphony orchestra performers in our city went out on strike. They aren’t just striking for themselves-- they fought to provide community resources in our schools, improve patient care for our seniors, and create art for the public.

“These workers and their struggles are the newest chapters of Chicago’s historic role at the center of our country’s labor movement.

“International Workers’ Day-- celebrated around the world on May 1-- commemorates the Haymarket protests in Chicago in 1886, which led to the 8 hour working day. The Pullman strike, brutally suppressed by our own government, is commemorated every year on Labor Day.

“This is my own history too. I came to Chicago as an immigrant from Mexico, and my parents’ jobs and benefits as Teamsters-- and my own work as a member of the Retail Workers Union, United Legal Workers/ UAW, and the Teamsters-- helped make me who I am today.

“So when these workers walk out on strike, they walk out for all of us. Safety at work, dignity in retirement, a living wage-- these are important issues for everyone.

“There’s a picket line chant that says ‘If we can’t get it, shut it down! And it’s time the working class did just that.

“Striketober was a long time coming.

- The federal minimum wage has been \$7.25 for over a decade, but billionaires got 62 percent richer during the pandemic.
- A vial of insulin costs \$6 to make, but pharmaceutical companies sell it for as much as \$275 dollars.
- Rent, Childcare, and Medical bills go up and up, and pundits won’t stop complaining about wage inflation.

“So workers across our country are standing up to say: Enough is enough! And they are standing up for us. So we’ve got to support these workers on the picket lines any way we can.

“In Congress, that means supporting pro-worker legislation like the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, and the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act, which guarantee workplace rights. It means protecting frontline workers-- from nurses to CTA bus drivers to Instacart shoppers. It means supporting workers at the bargaining table and on the picket line.

“Because when workers fight, we all win.

“Si Se Puede! I yield back.”